

ABSTRACT

A single network appliance combines thin print server functionality with the functionality of network printer administration. The simple rack-mountable appliance has pre-installed software and acts as both a print server and print administrator on a network. The appliance performs as a typical thin print server, such as the Hewlett Packard JetDirect 4000 Print Appliance, and is accessed and managed from any remote computer running a web browser. As a thin print server, the appliance offers typical print spooling and queue functions. Using the single appliance as a print server instead of using a dedicated general purpose server or workstation, reduces the work load on system resources and increases printing performance on a network. In addition to providing thin print server functionality, the single appliance provides printer administration capabilities typically furnished by a general purpose network server installed with print administration software. Hewlett Packard's Web JetAdmin is an example of print administration software commonly installed on a general purpose network server which allows network administrators to perform many tasks associated with managing and monitoring network printers. The single network appliance has pre-installed print administration software which provides a view of all network printers and allows network administrators to create and maintain shared network printers through discovering, installing, configuring, grouping, troubleshooting, assigning printer drivers to, and creating print paths for, network printers. Thus, the single network appliance is a thin server with printer management capabilities that is easily plugged into a network to provide a comprehensive solution to the challenges faced when printing and administering printers in a network environment.